

## BOOK REVIEWS

IN CHARGE OF  
M. E. CAMERON



"THE STORY OF A GRAIN OF WHEAT." Appleton & Co., New York.

This little book, by William C. Edgar, editor of the *Northwestern Miller*, contains in its one hundred and ninety-odd pages many suggestions for the thoughtful reader—suggestions along lines that the modest title of the book never hints at, many and widely interesting, grave and trenchant sometimes, but full of quiet reminiscent humor at others. A glance at the illustrations of the book will perhaps convey the best idea of how big and large, and old and new, and world-wide this story of a grain of wheat is. The frontispiece is the "Old Mill, Winchester, England;" following it "A Field of Wheat" (of five thousand acres); "Wheat-Market, Assouan, Egypt;" "A Buda-Pesth Elevator;" "Russian Peasant Ploughing;" "Interior of an Argentine Mill;" "American Elevator Town;" "Quern, Isle of Man;" "Feudal Mill, Bagatz, France;" "Pompeian Mill," and "Dutch Windmills." These are some of the illustrations, but only a few of them—enough, however, to give a hint of the varied interest of the book.

The first chapter is a quaint and delicate little homily wherein the author disclaims all pretension to a greatly special scientific knowledge of his subject, and asks but to "touch upon the past and present achievement in wheat culture." This chapter is a history in little of the civilization of the world, beginning with the primitive man, who, neither sowing nor harvesting, seized and ravenously devoured the unmodified wheat berry; going on to the "black-bread times," where appear classes,—lord and peasant and a soldiery,—on through blights and famines, taxes and riots, "when nature and man conspired against the wheat," through the prosperous days when England's agriculture was the example of the world; past that, when, England grown too small for the story, there begins across the ocean "the march of the pioneer from east to west," and on to the climax of the "white-bread era." I cannot help giving the closing lines of this chapter entire; they are a prophecy and gospel in one: "Thus the tale of wheat is ever the story of man's achievement with God's help, each chapter marking an upward step in human progress, an advance in knowledge, science, and civilization; finally triumphing in a brotherhood of man, wherein the East may be hungry, but the West will not let her starve. Interdependent, the nations shall feed each other, and wheat will continue its beautiful mission of peace and good-will, and there will be no more hunger in all the world."

The second chapter most interestingly takes up the disease and sickness which attacks wheat and methods of preventing or coping with these; and we are in this connection bidden to observe that "the wheat family, as behooves so ancient and conservative a house, repels the attacks of sickness by active and positive old-school medicines, and that the principles of Christian Science have not been applied to any extent in the elimination of wheat diseases." Perhaps it is by way of mentioning that the exception proves the rule that we are told

immediately after the foregoing of the miraculous answer to prayer for the stay of the grasshopper plague in Minnesota in 1877.

Great as is the temptation to linger in the early part of the book, we must not fail to spend a word or two on the later chapters, especially Chapter X., which treats of the milling of wheat. It is the most fascinating chapter in this wholly fascinating book. An interesting note for ourselves is, that the earliest mill operators were women—we appear to have monopolized the industry for some four thousand years; then we find slaves of a baser sort and criminals put to the grinding. Later, in the early Christian era, we seem to be doing the family grinding by means of the quern. Mr. Edgar quotes in this connection Wyckliffe's translation of our Lord's prophecy, "Tweine wymmen schulen ben gryndyng in o quern, oon schal be taken and the tother lefte."

There are some pages on the feudal struggle in the history of milling, when king, priest, and squire insisted, by right of might, on the monopoly of the milling industry; but the chapter is far too short; it hardly more than hints at what the author knows of "Soke" or "Soc," as this feudal monopoly was called. That is the fault of the book. Mr. Edgar is in love with his subject, knows it by heart, finds beauties in it that the more indifferent observer would pass by without dreaming that they existed; he could go on, we feel sure, giving us volumes for chapters of the most thrilling history, the most heart-breaking tragedy, as the St. Croix story attests, for one instance; but he is dogged on by a sense of duty, or so it would seem, to give us dates, statistics, awful totals of dollars and bushels. But many readers may find in these, to us vast and vague data, the interest of the book. "This story of a grain of wheat tells the story of man's long-continued struggle for plenty; the response of nature to her children asking for food; the emergence of mankind from savagery, when, regardless of anything save the pangs of hunger, the first miller plucked the berry from the stalk and, using his teeth for millstones, ground grist for a customer who would not be denied—his stomach."

#### THE SERVANT PROBLEM. Miss Jane Addams in *Good Housekeeping*.

In an article entitled "The Servant Problem," which appeared in the September number of *Good Housekeeping*, Miss Jane Addams lays serious charges against the housekeepers of America. "Why," she asks, "with the increasing number of American housekeepers who are college graduates, and with advantages undreamed of by their grandmothers,—courses in science, economics, and so forth,—is there so little apparent improvement in the administration of the household?" Miss Addams herself answers the question and suggests the means by which to correct the unharmoniousness which makes housework the bugbear of the present time.

American housekeepers, or, as they love to consider themselves, homekeepers, are too conservative in keeping to old traditions and in refusing to take up and apply the inventions of science meant to do for them those things they really want done; they are too timid about trying new things; they are selfish in requiring their families to battle along with a poor and hampering administration because they lack the courage to throw off the outgrown domestic machinery and venture forth as pioneers of better things. Miss Addams warns us that the world will not stand still for our bidding, and that the needed changes are bound to come in spite of all opposition, and she suggests the necessity of our recognizing and coöperating with the advancing change in conditions. She advises